

## ADDITIONS TO THE AVIFAUNA OF KERR CO., TEXAS.

BY AUSTIN PAUL SMITH.

IN 'The Auk' for April, 1911 (Vol. XXVIII, No. 2), Mr. Howard Lacey gives a list of 'The Birds of Kerrville, Texas, and Vicinity.' Embodying as it does, the observations of a close student of nature for nearly thirty years, it is a reasonably complete enumeration of the avifauna of the region covered; so that the following notes are merely meant to supplement his article, either by the addition of several species found by the writer; by replacement with forms recently differentiated, of species he has recorded; or by extension of breeding and migration dates.

Ingram (formerly Ingraham) is a small village, situated in the valley of the Guadalupe River, seven miles due west of Kerrville, and of nearly the same altitude (1675 feet); but the hills in the vicinity of the first named place, rise more abruptly and attain a greater elevation, than near Kerrville; and it is on these higher hills, and the draws that head among them, that the Upper Sonoran marks its eastern extension in Texas. A characteristic plant of this zone is the beautiful 'Wintergreen' or Texas Madrona (*Arbutus texana*); which with the Cedar (*Juniperus mexicana*), constitutes the principal arborescent growth on many of the hilltops. Ingram itself, lies well within the lower Sonoran, as may be inferred from the scattering mesquite growing near by; as well as the Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) lining the river. It is noteworthy that within sight of this village are several large trees of the American Elm (*Ulmus americana*); also a deciduous *Sophora*, possibly *S. affinis*.

All notes pertain to observations made within a radius of ten miles of Ingram; during a period extending from November 18, 1914, to July 15, 1915. Altogether some 150 forms were recorded from this area.

**Querquedula discors.** BLUE-WINGED TEAL.—There is little doubt that this teal breeds in the region as it was present throughout June, usually frequenting the small streams tributary to the Guadalupe.

**Pisobia fuscicollis.** WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER.—Opposite Ingram,

the river broadens out, forming a number of small mud flats; it was there that most of the wading birds were observed. The present species was noted between May 8 and 25 and during most of that period, was the most abundant member of its family.

**Pisobia bairdi.** BAIRD'S SANDPIPER.—On May 26 a lone individual of this species was recorded; it was in the company of a small flock of Semipalmated Sandpiper.

**Pisobia minutilla.** LEAST SANDPIPER.—As far as I could ascertain, the Least Sandpiper was much less numerous than the following with which it generally associated. Both species appeared early in May, and remained up to about June 1.

**Ereunetes pusillus.** SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER.—This species was quite abundant, considering the limited area suited to its requirements; especially so during the final two weeks of its stay. Neither this nor the preceding three species are listed by Lacey.

**Helodromas solitarius cinnamomeus.** WESTERN SOLITARY SANDPIPER.—It was the western subspecies of the Solitary Sandpiper that I found occurring. It was present during May but never more than one or two birds were seen in a day, and at all times very shy.

**Actitis macularia.** SPOTTED SANDPIPER.—Lacey surmises that the Spotted Sandpiper breeds in the region. This is undoubtedly so, as I saw the species up to the day preceding my departure. It was first noted about May 5.

**Colinus virginianus texanus.** TEXAS BOB-WHITE.—Nests containing sets of 23 and 30 eggs were found. These were in all probability community nests, as the eggs in both followed several types in form and were of considerable difference in size.

**Meleagris gallopavo intermedia.** RIO GRANDE WILD TURKEY.—There can be little doubt that, at the present time, Wild Turkeys exist in greater numbers in Kerr and adjoining counties than in any other part of Texas. Their abundance may be accounted for, as the result of the encroachment of the Cedar and various species of scrubby oaks upon lands formerly under cultivation or in pasture; to the decrease in numbers of the Armadillo (*Tatu novemcinctum texanum*) which of late years have been much hunted for commercial purposes; and to the enactment of a law limiting the open season and the number that may be killed. During the winter spent in the region several heavy snowfalls occurred. These caused many turkeys to seek open spots in the valleys and along fence rows, often in the vicinity of human habitations, and I recall one flock of seven hunting for several hours within a hundred feet of the building I lived in.

**Polyborus cheriway.** AUDUBON'S CARACARA.—Seen on several dates during March, usually along the river, but occasionally small streams higher up in the hills.

**Strix varia albogilva.** TEXAS BARRED OWL.—Although Lacey judges this owl to be a rather common resident, I was able, during my residence, to locate but one, and to hear perhaps one or two others. Evi-

dently the growth existing at the present day along the river is not dense enough to suit its requirements, and it is only in the heavily wooded draws among the hills that it is now found.

**Otus asio hasbroucki.** RIDGW.—The Screech Owls that breed along the Guadalupe, and its tributaries, within the limits defined, seem typical of this recently described subspecies. All the examples I collected conform in every particular with the original description (Ridgway, *Birds of N. and Mid. Amer.*, Vol. VI, 694), as compared with *O. a. mccalli*; and when compared with *O. a. aikenii*, are found to have the barrings much heavier, especially on the thighs, as well as in being dichromatic. Two specimens secured during the evening of June 26; one an adult female, and the other an immature two-thirds grown, that was being fed by the old bird, both were in the brown phase of plumage, proving this assertion.

**Coccyzus americanus (occidentalis?)** CALIFORNIA CUCKOO.—Based upon an examination of the material I collected, the cuckoos found along the upper Guadalupe had better be considered as intermediates. Several males in this series barely average the measurements of typical *americanus*.

**Ceryle americana septentrionalis.** TEXAS KINGFISHER.—The Texas Kingfisher was rarely observed until a point about three miles above Ingram was reached; but from thence up the river it was fairly common (a pair or two for each mile). Only once did I meet with it along the smaller streams, although the Belted Kingfisher favored these commonly.

**Centurus aurifrons.** GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER.—A limited number of this species were resident in the valley, but it rarely ascended into the hills; and then only during the late fall and winter.

**Colaptes auratus luteus.** NORTHERN FLICKER.—It is apparent that during the winter of 1914-5, an irruption of this Flicker occurred within the region, as Mr. Lacey, in a recent conversation with me, stated that he had never met with *luteus* within Kerr County. I found it present almost throughout the winter, at times outnumbering *C. cafer collaris*. Intermediates between the two were collected.

**Nuttallornis borealis.** OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER.—I found this species to be a common spring transient, occurring between May 1 and June 1, inclusive. It frequented both stream courses and hillsides.

**Empidonax trailli trailli.** TRAILL'S FLYCATCHER.—This Flycatcher made its appearance about May 10 and was often observed up to the 21st. It showed the usual partiality for brushy growth fringing streams; perching well within cover of the foliage and as it rarely uttered any note, would have been difficult to detect, had it not been for the fact that it remained in one position but a short time.

**Empidonax minimus.** LEAST FLYCATCHER.—Recorded as a common transient between May 8 and 25, inclusive. The first individual observed was found perched in a clump of Spanish Oak (*Quercus texana*) on an otherwise barren hilltop. It generally preferred the immediate vicinity of watercourses, but was less prone to seek heavy cover than

*trailli*; although equally quiet during its presence. Lacey's account does not include this or the preceding species.

**Aphelocoma texana.** TEXAS JAY.— This very local form keeps well within the Upper Sonoran, except on occasions when it descends to the streams to drink, mostly after dry weather has set in; but it quickly returns to its natural haunt — hillsides covered with a mixed growth of cedar and oak. It was found to congregate in flocks, even during the breeding season which, as Lacey has correctly stated, occupies late March and early April, so perhaps only a portion of its numbers nest annually. The Texan Jay while affecting a varied diet is very fond of the acorns of the Spanish and shin oaks, searching these out and eating them after they have sprouted. Until the plumage of this Jay is much worn, it closely resembles *A. woodhousei*, for the brown on the back is much obscured by a slaty cast in the fresh plumage while many of the adults have the under tail coverts strongly tinged with blue.

**Molothrus ater ater.** COWBIRD.— Judging from material secured this is the breeding form; but several examples taken in late March and in April possess a heavier, shorter bill than is usual in true *ater*; although seemingly not variety *obscurus*.

**Astragalinus tristis tristis.** GOLDFINCH.— This common winter visitant was noted as late as April 7 frequently associating in flocks with the following.

**Astragalinus psaltria mexicanus.**<sup>1</sup> Examination of a large series of adult males from the region shows a uniformity in the intensity of the black on the upperparts. Even examples taken in winter present little evidence of a greenish tinge. Although Lacey considers it as a summer visitant only, I found it throughout my stay. Limited in numbers during most of the winter but of common occurrence after March 1.

**Passerculus sandwichensis nevadensis.** GREAT BASIN SAVANNAH SPARROW.— The form found commonly wintering was *alaudinus*, as was shown by the identifications made by the Biological Survey. One skin however (taken March 7) was returned labelled *nevadensis*. Savannah Sparrows were present up to April 5.

**Ammodramus savannarum bimaculatus.** WESTERN GRASSHOPPER SPARROW.— As Lacey seems to consider the Western Grasshopper Sparrow only a winter visitant, it seems worthy of record to give the final date — May 8 — upon which I noted it. This bird was most frequently encountered on hilltops where the cedar was scattered enough to allow grass to grow.

**Zonotrichia querula.** HARRIS'S SPARROW.— The presence of this distinguished looking sparrow was coincident with the coldest period of the year, or from January 25 to February 5, when small flocks were several times seen.

**Zonotrichia albicollis.** WHITE-THROATED SPARROW.— Appears to be an uncommon winter visitant. Lacey gives one record only, while I observed at least two in company of various other sparrows, February 6.

<sup>1</sup> The race *mexicanus* is not recognized in the A. O. U. Check-List.

***Aimophila ruficeps eremœca*.** ROCK SPARROW.— I found the Rock Sparrow most numerous during the winter months. It is however, a common resident of the region; much more abundant over a given area than I found either *scotti* in Arizona, or *ruficeps* in California. It keeps closely to heavy brush covering hillsides, or (principally in winter) weedy patches along streams. During the breeding season, males were now and then to be seen, mounted on the topmost branch of a tree, singing in a rather dispirited manner.

***Spizella pallida*.** CLAY-COLORED SPARROW.— The date of departure, given by Lacey for this species, is April 24. I only noted it between May 10 to 13; when a limited number, mostly singly or in pairs, were seen feeding along roadsides.

***Spizella pusilla arenacea*.** WESTERN FIELD SPARROW.— During the winter months this is the prevailing form; it withdraws rather gradually, not finally departing until after the middle of April when *pusilla* alone remains to breed.

***Melospiza melodia juddi*.** DAKOTA SONG SPARROW.— In the list given by Lacey, *melodia* is the name given to the Song Sparrows visiting the region; and it is quite likely that the eastern form does occur though all examples that I forwarded to the Biological Survey were assigned to the variety *juddi*. The species is a common winter visitant, usually found in brush or weeds in vicinity of streams. Departs early, none seen after March 17.

***Pipilo erythrophthalmus erythrophthalmus*.** TOWHEE. — On January 19, the familiar notes of the Towhee, issuing from a plum thicket, drew my attention. The bird being secured, proved to be a female, of large size, and in high plumage. I presume it to be an unusual visitant, as this was the only instance that I met with it, and Lacey makes no mention of it.

***Petrochelidon lunifrons tachina*.** LESSER CLIFF SWALLOW.— There can be little doubt that true *lunifrons* occurs in migration but all examples of this species secured, from the date it was first seen (April 15), seem to be fairly typical of *tachina*. This form is by far the most numerous of the breeding Cliff Swallows. *P. fulva pallida* appears not to occur in the eastern half of the county, being first met with about six miles west of Ingram, where several isolated colonies nest.

***Lanivireo solitarius solitarius*.** BLUE-HEADED VIREO.— I met with the Solitary Vireo on two dates, April 28 and May 17. The single bird observed on the later date, was located by its rich and voluble song, with which I was previously unacquainted.

***Vireo atricapillus*.** BLACK-CAPPED VIREO.— This conspicuously marked species arrived about April 5. Nest-building had begun, a nearly completed one being found April 13. The Black-capped Vireo is sometimes found breeding in proximity to *V. griseus* but generally its choice of nesting site is in its favorite feeding haunts — low shin oak, or dwarf plum thickets, on dry hillsides rarely resorted to by the White-eyed Vireo.



The male *atricapillus* is rather easy to locate by reason of its subdued, though persistent, song; the female however, being of duller plumage and quiet mien, is less likely to be met with, and when incubating can almost be touched before leaving the nest.

**Vermivora celata celata.** ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER.—The Orange-crowned Warbler was found to be present throughout the winter, mostly associated with flocks of Kinglets, Chickadees (*Penthestes carolinensis agilis*) and Titmice (*Bæolophus atricristatus sennetti*) usually hunting among the cedar brake. It remained up to at least April 21.

**Dendroica auduboni auduboni.** AUDUBON'S WARBLER.—While not mentioned by Lacey, this species was to be expected in the region. On April 24, I found several individuals hunting over a cypress, growing along the river, near Ingram.

**Dendroica dominica albilora.** SYCAMORE WARBLER.—The arrival of this species was much delayed in 1915. Lacey gives the average date of its appearance as March 22, yet I did not meet with it until April, although frequently visiting its favorite haunt — the cypress groves along the river. As this is the western limit of the breeding range, it was to be expected that the individuals found here would develop the sub-specific characters, which is evidently true, as none of the skins I have examined show any trace of yellow on the superciliary stripe.

**Dendroica chrysoparia.** GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER.—This much remarked species did not make its appearance until March 27, the latest date, according to Mr. Lacey, within his experience. The adult males (third year), preceded the females and younger males by some five days. Until nidification is well advanced, it was seldom found outside of the 'cedar brake'; thereafter it was of more general dispersion and after the young were on the wing, resorted to the walnut thickets. It is my impression that the Golden-cheeked Warbler hunts over, rather than through, the foliage of a tree. A perhaps peculiar trait of this species is its U-shaped sallies after flying insects, from the lower limbs of a tree. While as a rule a very active bird, I have seen it sitting motionless for minutes at a time at any hour of the day.

**Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis.** GRINNELL'S WATER-THRUSH.—It is a coincidence, worthy of note, that the single record Lacey gives for this form, May 10, 1895, is the same day of the month upon which I secured the only individual seen.

**Oporornis tolmiei.** MCGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER.—Several birds of this species were seen, and one secured, May 21. Apparently an original record for the county.

**Dumetella carolinensis.** CATBIRD.—Lacey considers this familiar bird an uncommon visitant, yet I met with it twice in the region — May 10 and 13.

**Catherpes mexicanus conspersus.** CAÑON WREN.—Dr. Louis B. Bishop writes me that Mr. Oberholser considers the Cañon Wrens from the region to constitute a distinct form, *polioptilus*. It is a generally distributed resident wherever bluffs occur.

**Thryomanes bewicki eremophilus.**<sup>1</sup> Among the large series of Texas Wrens collected, one skin was found that could not be allocated, it being much paler in plumage than *cryptus*, the common resident form, and also differed from *bairdi*. On being sent to the Biological Survey, it was pronounced by Mr. Oberholser to be *eremophilus*, and he informs me that it must be considered as a rare or casual visitant to the region. The example in question was taken March 12.

**Troglodytes aëdon parkmani.** WESTERN HOUSE WREN.—A rather common winter visitant. A bird shot April 24, appears to record an unusually late date for the bird so far south.

**Certhia familiaris americana.** BROWN CREEPER.—One shot at the edge of a cedar brake, April 2; not otherwise noted.

**Regulus satrapa satrapa.** GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET.—I found it present nearly throughout the winter, usually outnumbering *R. calendula*. It is probably of irregular irruption, as Mr. Lacey told me he missed it some years entirely. The last individuals were observed April 2.

**Hylocichla ustulata swainsoni.** OLIVE-BACKED THRUSH.—A single bird shot May 17, as it was perching in the underbrush of a heavily wooded draw, adds another species to the county list.

**Hylocichla guttata pallasi.** HERMIT THRUSH.

**Hylocichla guttata sequoiensis.** SIERRA HERMIT THRUSH.—These two forms of the Hermit Thrush were commonly present throughout the winter; the latter variety remaining until April 16.

**Planesticus migratorius propinquus.** WESTERN ROBIN.—A bird shot March 18 is identifiable as above. *P. migratorius*, the eastern form, is a common winter visitant; departing April 13, in 1915.

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<sup>1</sup> This race is not regarded as separable from *bairdi* in the A. O. U. Check-List.